

By Babu Thomas

<http://www.christianpost.com/article/20091010/us-lawmakers-speak-for-orissa-christians/index.html>

The state government of Orissa has taken some steps to promote peace and unity in the region and assured the Christians of their protection. But out of more than 750 cases filed by Christians against Hindu attackers, only 17 people have been convicted to various terms of imprisonment. Moreover, the perpetrators continue to intimidate the small Christian community.

In the letter to Patnaik, lawmakers acknowledge the positive steps of reform taken by the government of Orissa. But they also recognize religious liberty as a basic human right and ask specific questions regarding the government's plans to bring justice to Christians.

The letter comes after a U.S. religious freedom panel placed the predominantly Hindu country under its watch list. Criticizing the Indian government for its failure to protect the rights of religious minorities, **the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom** in August added India to its annual list of countries where religious freedom conditions require close monitoring due to the nature and extent of violations of religious freedom engaged in or tolerated by the governments.